

The
NEW MOVIE

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The First Interview with the Famous Animated Cartoon Character, Who Was Down to His Last Rind When He Hit Hollywood Success

By DICK HYLAND

I WANT to tell you right now that this Mickey Mouse is a great little fellow.

If some people have to be just mice, while others can be screen stars, Mickey is entitled to be the latter and ride in Scootmobiles, live in a penthouse, and have his own private golf course. Because, with all his great success, Mickey Mouse has remained kind and simple. Under his new vest—and Mickey has a taste for head vests which reminds me of Ray Long and Ray Howard to say nothing of G. G. McIntyre—beats a heart of gold.

Nobody I have ever interviewed has been more receptive to my ideas or more willing to do things just the way I wanted them done.

MICKEY MOUSE, you know, was not always rich and famous. He has known what it means to be right down to the last rind. He has actually lived in tenements where they did not have as much as a piece of bacon, even on Christmas.

And believe me, this great public idol, this mouse whose name has been killed over almost every other star in the business, has not forgotten it.

I had never met Mickey Mouse. That may seem strange to you, knowing that I live in Hollywood, where screen stars are so plentiful they often get in your hair and you can't get away from them even if you wanted to. But Mickey Mouse, like Al Jolson, is very retiring. I have never seen him at a Hollywood party, he does not attend openings, he has never spoken over the radio, although at times I have thought I heard him over mine.

He has his own group of friends and a very large

family. Nine brothers and fourteen sisters, to be exact. Most of his friends are from the old days. He faced many a cat within the carefree days of his youth. Of course, he is still a young mouse—only eight years old—but he has lived a lot as a mouse must if he is to survive in this day of apartment houses and frigidares.

It was a difficult job locating him. No one knew where he lived, and the job of finding his home was as hard as finding Greta Garbo's.

However, I knew that his studio was right across from Paramount—the same one Douglas Fairbanks used to have—and I went over there. I want confess that the thought of meeting Mickey Mouse face to face gave me a little thrill down my spine. I have adored Mickey from afar for so long.

But the meeting was to be delayed some time.

For Mickey had never been interviewed. It wasn't that he had any idea of "his private life being sacred to himself" or anything as silly as that. "After all," he said to me later, "we don't allow the President of the United States any private life. I'm no bigger than he is."

No, it is just that he has always been very shy, very modest about his achievements.

I hung around his studio for almost a week. No one would give me any encouragement. Everybody was busy getting ready for the next Mickey Mouse super-special. A harmonica in an adjoining office was blowing on a theme song. "No trap shall catch you while I am near you; stay with me and happy you'll be, with life a breeze and plenty of cheese." I thought I could detect the fine Italian hand of George Olsson himself in the arrangement.

I wiled away the time by talking to Mickey's secretary, a neat little blonde trick.

"What kind of a gnat is this fellow, personally?" I asked.

"Nice enough for anyone," she said.

"You don't say that like you mean it," I said.

"No?"

"No."

"Well, I wouldn't want him for mine," she confessed. "He is too vivacious, too lively for me. I prefer the home type. With a gent like Mickey, now, you could never tell where he was. He'd be the kind to stay out nights, too. And I don't want any husband like that."

"You'd be surprised the way the gals chase that mouse," she continued. "And the fan letters he gets! Some female mice have no pride. Oh, I guess it is just that I like the old-fashioned kind and Mickey is a modern mouse."

If it had not been for Minnie I might never have met Mickey and been able to tell you about him.

Of course, you know Minnie. You have seen her in

Mickey Mouse is now wealthy. He rides in Scootmobiles, lives in a penthouse and has his own golf course.



MICKEY MOUSE:

His Life and Art

plenty of your favorite pictures, playing opposite Mickey. Well, I was reading my book in an outer office, waiting to see Isaac Bat, the supervisor, who had sent word out to me that he was in a conference, when who should come tripping in but Minnie. And of you like brunettes more you would certainly go for Minnie. I am not surprised that Mickey had been reported engaged to his leading lady.

She glanced at the stenographer—and received a dirty look in return. I suspected a bit of rivalry there, despite the line the steno had given me about Mickey.

Minnie had to wait for Mister Isaac Bat, too. You know how supervisors are. Making people wait is about the only occupation they have. And while we were waiting I took my courage in both hands and addressed her.

The first thing I knew I was telling her all my troubles. That little mouse certainly has a sympathetic nature.

"I think you're perfectly right," she said, wrinkling her nose at me just as she does on the screen. "Somebody ought to interview Mickey. Chaplin gets all the publicity and, if I do say it myself, who shouldn't Mickey be just as funny at times? And Mickey plays a much better love scene, even if he does lack some of the pathos for which Chaplin is famous. I bet if you go right over there and just walk in, he will be glad to see you. He is actually nice—really."

I think she blushed at that, but it is hard to tell—with a mouse. Anyway, she told me where he lived in a penthouse, on top of the big new building on Hollywood Boulevard. Many times I've gone by that building. Many times I've noticed that penthouse as I've glanced aloft to catch a glimpse of Ben Lyon or Hoot Gibson flying in their planes. I've wondered who it was that had had the ingenuity to put a penthouse there in such a quiet and exclusive spot. To think that it was Mickey Mouse!

I knocked—and Mickey Mouse himself opened the door.

"Well, I guess it is all right," he said when I had explained my errand. "But the truth is that I am naturally timid and my mother—she was a grand person—always taught us never to speak to strangers. I have, at times, of course, but early training like that makes a mark upon your character. But come in—come in."

And there I was with Mackey Mouse. It was typically a bachelor's room (comfort resigned). The chairs were cushioned. Bright colors—but not gaudy—prevailed. On the mantel was a framed picture, a dignified mezzens with whiskers.

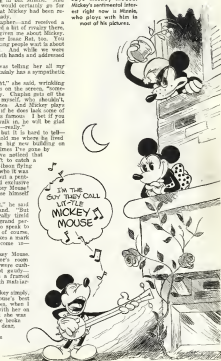
"That's my mother," said Mickey simply, as we settled down. "A mouse's best friend is his mother. At times, when I was very young, I disagreed with her on things she made me do. But she was right. She is—was (his voice broke a bit)—always right, the dear, sweet darling."

Mickey dozed at his nose with a little square of silk. He snuffed.

"She gave me the

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"Three women were the most important figures in my life," says Mickey Mouse. Mickey's sentimental interest right now is Minnie, who plays with him in most of his pictures.



had scared the wits out of me. I was ready to quit pictures and take up the rugged life that is the lot of most men. I wanted to get away from everything I knew.

Walking across a field out near Culver City—I had taken that route home in order to be alone and see to one—I met her."

Mickey closed his eyes for a moment and I am sure he lived again that emotion.

"In a little patch of woods," he remembered, finally. "Sadie Timmons, she was her name. Small, daintily built, and the sweetest smile I've seen in the world. Those eyes—ah, how. 'Hello, mister,' she said to me as I passed the spot where she was sitting. 'I looked at her and something turned over inside me. 'Tarry a bit, she said, 'and let us chatter. You look bothered. Tell mama.'"

"She was so sincere and frank that I did. We talked until long after the moon had risen to its highest point—either it was the stars have ever seemed so bright to me as they were that night. I finally said that I was not going to leave her, that I would stay and marry her and live a life of freedom, then close to nature."

"But she said no. She loved me, yes; I must believe that. But she refused to see my public, my art, my urge for the better things in life. Told me that she was but an obstacle, and that I would forget her. She was wrong. I never have. I think of her at least once every six months or so, especially when I am in Culver City."

"I left her and returned to the studio—to work and gain experience. Some after that they gave me the opportunity to play lead and the future looked brighter. But for her I would still be just another unknown mouse."

"Then came Minnie. "I met her at the studio. She was an extra. We went around together at odd times for almost a year. Nothing serious, you know. Just a bit of relaxation. But once and more she became a part of my life. I talked over my pictures with her and was surprised and pleased at her sagacity. Finally, came the day which was to be the most important in my life. The studio wanted me to sign a removal of my contract at the same salary I had been getting. But Minnie objected. Said I was foolish and did not know anything about money matters. Maybe I don't. Minnie has never been content except for the things I'll buy."

"The studio said I would sign at their price or not at all. Minnie said not at all it was—and there I was left without a job."

"Things looked black for a while. I could not get a job with another studio, could not finance my own productions on the scale I wanted to make."

"And then came the ladies, my Allah praise them. All my musical talents could be utilized with this new medium and I was saved. Yes, even to great demand."

"But had not my mother trained me, Sadie reminded me and Minnie advised me I would have gotten nowhere. Tell my public that."

Remember a bag of golf clubs in one corner of the room I asked Mickey where he played.

"Well," he said, "I tried the Lakeside Golf Club, where so many of my fellow stars play, but soon stopped that. That fellow Tony Martin plays there too often for me. I saw him and Frank Lloyd senior one day and

stopped off the fairway to allow them to pass through. Martin looked so easy beside that and yet kept a flock of Spanish verbs, nouns and adjectives which, while I did not understand them, were very clear in their meaning. He then looked in his shirt straight at the tree behind which I had taken refuge. The shirt rapped around the trunk of the tree and gave me my first and only shave. Took all the whiskers off one side of my face. Fortunately, it was in between pictures and they grew out again before my next production. But I never went back to Lakeside. Too dangerous."

"Instead I bought half an acre of ground out near Westwood and had my gardener lay out a thirty-one hole course for me. Nighttime holes in all I want to play a day but I had the land so thought I might as well use it. It is the only course in the world with clouds underfoot on every hole. I made the bottoms of the sand boxes into refrigerators."

That is another side to Mickey Mouse—the inventive. Had he not been a great screen star, he might easily have been another Edison.

One invention of Mickey's is to be seen on his golf course. The holes—cups—on the greens have no bottoms in them. That allows the ball to roll into a pipe which carries it to the next tee where it is in readiness when Mickey steps up to drive off.

"It came raining," and Mickey, "I hate to stoop. I was going to give the invention to Harold Lloyd, my fellow star, who also has a private golf course, although his is only nine holes in length, but someone told me that they never hole out on that course. Lloyd and his friends always consider themselves putts under eight feet."

I looked at Mickey and marveled that one who is so great in one line of endeavor, could be so concerned with other lines. We talked. And the depths of his mind opened up to me. History, psychology, botany, astrology—all were open books to Mickey. Would that I had the space to include some of the vast store of thoughts which dropped from his lips. I finally mentioned his club—the Mickey Mouse Club which is growing all over the Western states.

"Yes," he said, "I am very interested in the little folks. They will some day be the rulers of our land; one of them might even be president—the kidnap."

"The club has a creed, hasn't it?" I asked. "Could I have a copy of it?"

"Certainly," he said.

I reproduced it for you here.

I will be upright and fair to all my dealings with my playmates.

I will be truthful. I will help my mother and father and will always stand ready to help people older than myself. I will obey my teacher and strive for higher marks in my school studies. And always I will respond promptly to the call of Chief Mickey Mouse and observe all the laws of the Club.

"Is that," I asked, "the thought you wish to implant in the minds of the young?"

"Yes," said Mickey. "Tell them that."

"And nothing else?"

"Well," he hesitated. "Tell 'em to get a lot of spinach."

The interview was at an end. And so with that message straight from Mickey, I leave you with your thoughts.

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